

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L OSLO 2058

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E.O. 1162: GDS

TAGS: OVIP (KISSINGER, HENRY A.)

SUBJ: SECVISIT: BIOGRAPHIC: MINISTER OF DEFENSE ROLF HANSEN

1. DEFENSE MINISTER ROLF HANSEN, 55, APPOINTED BY PRIME MINISTER NORDLI IN JANUARY 1976, IS EXPECTED TO BE A STRONG PERSONALITY IN THE NEW CABINET. AN ACTIVE AND INFLUENTIAL POLITICIAN SINCE BEFORE THE WORLD WAR AND LIKED AND RESPECTED IN THE MODERATE OF "TRADITIONAL SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC" WING OF THE LABOR PARTY, HANSEN IS A STRONG NATO SUPPORTER AND NOTED FOR BEING OUTSPOKEN AND DECISIVE. HIS APPOINTMENT WAS WELCOMED BY CONSERVATIVE NEWSPAPERS WHICH ARE OFTEN CRITICAL OF THE LABORPARTY AS WEAK ON SECURITY POLICY.

2. KNOWN PRINCIPALLY FOR REBUILDING LABOR YOUTH AFTER THE WAR AND FOR HIS STRONG HAND IN OSLO MUNICIPAL AND SCHOOL POLITICS MORE RECENTLY, HANSEN WAS ALSO ACTIVE FOR FOURTEEN YEARS IN ESTABLISHING THE ARMED FORCES' GRIEVANCE SYSTEM AND MAKING IT WORK, AND PARTICIPATED IN FORMULATING LABOR PARTY DEFENSE POLICY. SIGNIFICANTLY, HE USED HIS FIRST PUBLIC REMARKS AFTER HIS APPOINTMENT TO STRESS WESTERN ALLIED DEFENSE COOPERATION AND WE FULLY EXPECT HIM TO ACTIVELY SUPPORT NATO, CLOSE BILATERAL MILITARY COOPERATION WITH THE US AND OTHER ELEMENTS OF PRESENT NORWEGIAN DEFENSE POLICY.

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3. IN THE DEFENSE FIELD, HANSEN WAS AN OMBUDSMAN FOR

THE ARMED FORCES FOR 14 YEARS AND A MEMBER OF THE LABOR PARTY COMMITTEE WHICH FORMULATED LABOR POLICY IN REGARD TO NORWAY'S CURRENT FIVE-YEAR DEFENSE PLAN. IN HIS FIRST INTERVIEW AFTER BEING NAMED MINISTER, HANSEN SAID: "I SEE NO DEFENSE POLICY ALTERNATIVE AT THIS TIME OTHER THAN ALLIED WESTERN DEFENSE COOPERATIONS." HE ADDED: "I WAS FOR 14 YEARS A MEMBER OF THE DEFENSE ESTABLISHMENT'S OMBUDSMAN'S COUNCIL AND CAME TO KNOW THE DEFENSE ESTABLISHMENT WELL THEN. I THEREFORE FEEL PARTLY ON MY HOME COURT."

4. ROLF HANSEN WAS BORN IN OSLO, JULY 23, 1920. DURING THE WAR HE WAS CHAIRMAN OF AUF'S UNDERGROUND COMMITTEE AND LATER A REFUGEE IN SWEDEN. HE WAS A KEY FIGURE IN REBUILDING THE LABOR PARTY YOUTH ORGANIZATION AFTER THE WAR. HE SPEND AUGUST 1955-JANUARY 1956 IN THE US ON A FULLBRIGHT GRANT SPECIALIZING IN HE YOUTH ACTIVITIES UNDER THE NATIONAL SOCIAL WELFARE ASSEMBLY.

5. HANSEN WAS POLITICAL SECRETARY TO FORMER DEFENS AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS MINISTER GUNDMUND HARLEM DURING 1956-59. HE WAS NAMED ORGANIZATION SECRETARY OF THE OSLO LABOR PARTY, 1959-67 AND BECAME ITS ELECTED POLITICAL (GENERAL) SECRETARY, 1967-71; A MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL LABOR PARTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE; 1969-73; AND OSLO LABOR PARTY CHAIRMAN, 1972-74. UNED MINISTER, HE WAS ANAGER OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT'S PEOPLE'S THEATER BUILDING, WHICH HOUSES THE LABOR PARTY, ITS OSLO NEWSPAPER "ARBEIDERBLADET", THE NATIONAL OPERA AND MANY OTHER ORGANIZATIONS (A USEFUL, WELL-PAID SINECURE FOR ACTIVE LABOR POLITICIANS).

6. A WIDOWER WITH ONE SON OF 17, HANSEN HAS IMPRESSED US AS A SERIOUS AND, AT LEAST SUPERFICIALLY, MILD MAN. HE HAS WHITE, WAVY HAIR, A RED COMPLEXION AND BLUE EYES. HIS ENGLISH IS RUSTY, BUT IMPROVING AND HE UNDERSTANDS MOST OF WHAT IS SAID TO HIM. HE APPEARS TO BE SOMEWHAT AWED BY HIS NEW JOB BUT GIVES EVERY INDICATION THAT HE WILL ATTACK IT SERIOUSLY AND WITH AN ATTITUDE FRIENDLY TO THE CONFIDENTIAL

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